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Hugh Quill, *Director*
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November 18, 2009

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Secretary Dortch:

Please see the attached comments from the State of Ohio, Department of Administrative Services, Office of Information Technology, in the matter of the Louisiana Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee, Petition for Rulemaking, RM-11577.


Ohio, like Louisiana, has invested a significant amount of taxpayer monies in the last several years to provide police officers, firefighters, and other emergency responders with radio equipment capable of operating on our current 800 MHz trunked, digital radio system located throughout the state.

Additionally, Ohio is in the process of upgrading our statewide 800 MHz system, as well as several regional systems, to the new 700 MHz technology.

If our current investment in many thousand modern radios is nullified on January 1, 2017, Ohio's first responders will be faced with a potential insurmountable challenge of purchasing yet another generation of radios, all at a considerable cost to our citizens.

Ohio shares with Louisiana in asking for this mandated narrow banding of the yet-to-be utilized 700 MHz spectrum until January 1, 2025, with further suggestions more fully detailed in the attached comments.

Very truly yours,



H. Samuel Orth, III
State Chief Information Officer
State of Ohio

Enc: RM11577 – Comments of the State of Ohio

Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of)	
)	
Louisiana Statewide)	RM 11577
Interoperability Executive)	
Committee Petition for)	
Rulemaking)	

To: The Commission

Comments of the State of Ohio

These comments are filed by the State of Ohio (Ohio), through the Ohio Chief Information Officer, and its Multi-Agency Radio Communications System (MARCS) Program Director, in support of the Petition for Rulemaking, RM-11577, filed by the Louisiana Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee, concerning the date for required narrowbanding of the 700 MHz public safety radio frequencies to 6.25 KHz efficiency.

Relevancy

Ohio currently operates a trunked 800 MHz. statewide public safety radio system (MARCS) which is the statewide platform for providing interoperable communications for public safety and homeland security.

Constructed at a cost of over \$271 million dollars, it consists of over 200 transmitter sites providing better than 99% mobile coverage of the state. MARCS became fully operational in 2004, initially servicing some 20 state agencies and 150 locals with somewhere in the vicinity of 10-12,000 radios. MARCS provides Ohio with significant statewide interoperability. With the arrival of the 700 MHz. spectrums, MARCS has been actively planning expansion into a fully integrated, statewide P-25 "system of systems", with an expected implementation date of 2012.

Ohio, as Louisiana, is highly vulnerable to catastrophic weather events. Tornadoes, heavy snow and ice storms, and lingering effects of Gulf of Mexico hurricanes in the form of flooding rains and wind frequently occur. Local severe rainfall plagues various areas of the state almost predictably and can cause serious flooding issues on a yearly basis as well.

Ohio is a main transportation corridor, with continuous cross country shipments by train and truck and aircraft, as well as maritime shipping on the Great Lakes. Incidents involving any of these medium can impact other shipments and effectively block citizen travel and commodity movements for extended periods of time.

Ohio is also home to two nuclear power plants, with a third residing just across the border in Shippingport, Pennsylvania.

The above events and installations require efficient, effective communications interoperability at all levels of government.

Discussion

In the last several years a great deal of grant monies has been made available by various Federal agencies, primarily the Department of Homeland Security, for improving Interoperable Communications. According to the Ohio Emergency Management Agency, our State Administrative Agency (SAA), Ohio has received approximately \$75 million dollars over the last three years for interoperable communications. Most of this grant money has been applied to the purchase of 700/800 MHz radio equipment.

MARCS serves the Ohio Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC) in a technical advisory role and, as such, assisted with the review and evaluation of the many grant requests submitted. Acting in this role, MARCS has provided recommendations to the SIEC and SAA as to which requests served the spirit of the National Emergency Communications Plan and Ohio's Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (NCIP/SCIP) in the most beneficial manner.

These grant funds were used to purchase communications equipment available at the time. Now, vendors indicate these radios will not be upgradable and capable of operating at the 700 MHz. 6.25 KHz efficiency. This means our public safety first responder agencies, who were expecting to have equipment they could use for 12 to 15 years, or more, must literally retire this grant-purchased equipment after 8 years or less of service.

The Commission members should review the decision to mandate the transition to the narrow band. The vast negative impact this forced migration will have on a great many public safety agencies nationwide cannot be underestimated.

In Ohio, many if not all of the leadership in wireless public safety communications are highly upset with this unfunded mandate. Significant grant funds have been used on equipment compatible with this generation of MARCS, as well as the upcoming P-25 system. At the time of purchase of this equipment, 700 MHz. 6.25 KHz upgradable equipment was simply not available. Only this mid-year (2009) has type-accepted 6.25 KHz. Equipment become available, albeit at a significantly higher cost than previous equipment.

Today, more than 700 user agencies: federal, state, county, city, township, health districts, hospitals, public and private EMS providers, including every medical helicopter in Ohio, totaling over 35,000 subscriber units, enjoy the benefits of the system. They will find their radios to be inoperative on the soon to be implemented P25 700 MHz. portion of MARCS, in a little over seven years.

The cost of replacing this equipment in today's economic environment will be devastating to both state and local government entities, and could severely hamper or curtail the needed level of interoperability we are striving so diligently to achieve.

This year, PSIC grant money has been spent on a central controller and a large quantity of MARCS 700 MHz infrastructure for the Cuyahoga County (Cleveland) area, the most populous region in the state. A fully interoperable, P-25 Phase 1, 700 MHz. sub-system will be constructed to give first responders there a level of interoperability they have never enjoyed. This sub-system will be integrated into the existing Ohio MARCS 800 MHz. system, providing fully interoperable communications statewide.

Plans call for additional roll-out of P25 700 MHz. in otherwise spectrum-starved areas of the state for, both operational needs as well as interoperability.

Conclusion

Ohio questions the Commission as to how and why the December 31, 2016 date was reached. To our knowledge, no demonstrated need has been shown for additional spectrum in this band. There has been no hue and cry raised from the users, stating existing channels are too congested. Indeed, in most areas of the country, 700 MHz. has not even been implemented.

Ohio MARCS is confident the amount of 12.5 KHz channel available will meet our capacity needs well into the foreseeable future. There is no compelling evidence requiring a mandated transition to the narrower bands.

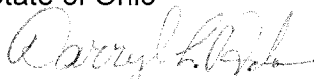
If any date is necessary at this time, Ohio supports Louisiana's suggested date of December 31, 2024.

Further study, documenting expected demand and usage of newly-released 700 MHz spectrum, is recommended.

Ohio more strongly believes the public safety community and the public interest will be better served if the Commission simply withdraws or reverses their action, pending further study and review.

Respectfully submitted,

H. Samuel Orth
Chief Information Officer
State of Ohio



Darryl L. Anderson
Director, Ohio MARCS

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